

STF 1998 - 1999

STOREFRONT FOR ART AND ARCHITECTURE

97 KENMARE STREET, NEW YORK, NY, 10012, U.S.A.

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October 13, 1998 - January 11, 1999

Reception October 13, 1998 6 - 8 pm  
Gallery Hours: Tues. - Sat., 11am-6pm

# Claude Lévêque

*untitled*

Claude Lévêque's installation at  
Storefront is presented in conjunction with  
the exhibition

**Premises: Invested Spaces in  
Visual Arts, Architecture, and  
Design from France, 1958-98**

**Premises** proposes a speculative and thematic approach to the past forty years of artistic and architectural practices concerned with the notions of site, location, territory, and the built environment.

**Premises** is the result of a unique collaboration between the curatorial teams of the Guggenheim Museum and the Musée National d'Art Moderne at the Centre Georges Pompidou, on view at the Guggenheim Museum Soho.

Claude Lévêque's installation is made possible with the support of the Centre Georges Pompidou.

Storefront for Art and Architecture is supported by:

The Stephen A. and Diana L. Goldberg Foundation, Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in Fine Arts, The Greenwall Foundation, The Jerome Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, New York State Council on the Arts, National Endowment for the Arts, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, and Friends.

Photo [this page]: Untitled, 1990  
Installation on site, Le Pervis, Tarbee  
shopping cart, flashing police-car lamp, projection  
Collection Les Musées d'Art  
Moderne de la Ville de Paris

**Premises** is organized by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation. HUGO BOSS is the sponsor of **Premises** as part of its ongoing support of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation. Transportation assistance is provided by Air France. DVD production and integration is provided by Zuma Digital.





"In his installations Claude Lévêque proves a skillfull manipulator of the unresolved tension between the abject and the marvellous, the vulgar and the exceptional, the anodine and the decisive, the delectable and the repugnant, the tender and the wild. They set up an interference amidst fact, scramble common sense, jam conformity and introduce otherness: they make reality unreal, beautiful."<sup>2</sup>



Photograph credits for pages two and three from left to right

Untitled, 1986  
"le trou dans la tête"

Troubles, 1997  
Installation on site,  
Kasseler Kunstverein, Kassel

My Way, 1996  
Installation on site,  
ARC - Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris

(background image)  
"I wanna be your dog", 1996  
Atelier Sainte Anne, Bruxelles

My Way, 1996  
Installation on site,  
ARC - Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris

Whirlwind, 1998  
Installation on site,  
Städtische Galerie, Bremen

Appartement occupé, 1994  
[detail] Bourges

Photograph credit page four

More Light, 1998 (detail)  
Installation on site  
Villa Arson, Nice

Drawing (background)  
Storefront NYC, 1998  
for installation on site



### Untitled, 1998

#### Storefront for Art and Architecture

Bleak private apartments, emptied coat-check rooms, abandoned public spaces, unused municipal swimming pools: these are some of the spaces Claude Lévêque's work has occupied over the years. Lévêque transgresses the boundaries of the white cube, severing the dependence on codified, sanitized spaces framed by museum walls.

From his first one-person show at Galerie Eric Fabre in 1984 to a more recent project designed for a concert hall in Brussels (Atelier Sainte Anne, 1996), Lévêque has constructed a body of work from a scant material vocabulary. At times his interventions are nearly invisible: manipulating a room's illumination, scattering pieces of clothing, adding a disco ball or randomly hanging strands of lights to a space. Lévêque infuses the ambience of a given place with a sense of a brutally interrupted event: his eerily silent spaces suggest that the music has just been shut off, and the visitor has the impression he or she has missed the end of the party. When music does figure into his work, it spans the range of his obsessions, from the Sex Pistols to German techno-fusion like Atari Teenage Riot. Lévêque does not hesitate to harness the energy of fashion; the use of current music invests his work with the timely force of a youth culture rebellion. These forms are not appropriated. The present tense is pushed to its own ends.

Resistance through youth culture refutes Benjamin H. D. Buchloh's condemnation of the current art/fashion trend, in his assertion that "[fashion is] the rapid and relatively facile construction of a mirage of subjectivity supplied by an industry designing identity substitutes according to cycles of repetition-compulsion transformed into production."<sup>1</sup> At first glance, Lévêque's practice might seem to be in collusion with popular culture's submission to MTV's commercial seduction, but Lévêque uses devices like music to explore the possibility of reinforcement and liberation within the media-saturated psychological enclosures of teenage subjectivity. Blurring the frontiers of décor, ambience, design, and scenography, Lévêque's work has a visceral aesthetic that beckons the viewer into his own autistic universe. Expansive rooms with overturned chairs and broken glass are like deserted film stills; one enters a carefully choreographed fiction only to realize that the atmosphere approximates the alienation pervading our own everyday lives. As art critic Eric Troncy notes, "What Lévêque produces is not so much works as autonomous worlds... barely stage-managed emancipations from his personal universe."<sup>2</sup>

Alison M. Gingeras and Bernard Blistène  
From the *Premises: Invested Spaces in Visual Arts, Architecture, and Design from France, 1958-99 Catalogue*

1. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Critical Reflections," *Artforum* (January 1997).  
2. Eric Troncy, "The Unreality of the World" in Claude Lévêque, *My Way* [exhibition] Paris: ARC, Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1996.

Bernard Blistène is Chief Curator and Deputy Director of the Musée National d'Art Moderne at the Centre Georges Pompidou.

Alison Gingeras is an Assistant Curator at the Guggenheim Museum.

### Claude Lévêque -Who is where?

Claude Lévêque finds themes and artistic devices for his work in the actual places, objects, situations, and events which are in his surroundings, the varied milieu of the suburbs of Paris, on the street or in politics. There, the traces of life are continuous, full of that which constitutes daily violence: at home in the crib ("le trou dans la tête", 1986), at the big party which leaves behind a ravaged room, in which only the disco ball continues to innocently spread its magical light, ("I wanna be your dog", 1986, Brussels) to the consciousness of great and small bourgeois dreams and fears, the atom bomb as a decorative neon line (Installation, 1993) or Mickey Mouse with the NS-Concentration Camp Auschwitz motto "Arbeit macht frei" as a speech bubble. ("Arbeit macht frei", 1992)

After coming to Paris, he became interested in Joseph Beuys and Christian Boltanski who, next to the Nouveau Réalisme Movement, made the strongest impression on him. Yet there are important differences in the use of the material, place, and the interest in history.

To begin with, Claude Lévêque defines the point of view and line of sight as a photographer, calling to mind Weegee's New York. Yet his observations and discoveries do not serve to invent a sensational picture or a horrible staging of a realistic environment, but the observation of and respect for the object, the place, the situation as the sign of the use of life, of persons, of emotions and events, of memory and history. Claude Lévêque reads that which is present as a symbolic sign of a self forming question. Thus the teddy bear defends himself with a note on his belly. "J' ai rien a perdre - je suis dé ja mort". It is fascinating to note that even with all of his 'realism', he has never adopted a cynical or ironic posture, is not at all pedagogical or comical, but shows objective compassion - in all its severity.



The aggressiveness in his production is not real, it originates in the projection of the observer, of those who read the stories or invent something out of the pictures in their heads - the objects have, in the meantime, become truly dead. The situation, recognized as production, becomes a topic, the arrangement becomes an artistic composition.

The relationship between documentary and representational methods, of the placement of quotes and signs, remains ambivalent. In *Appartement Occupé* (1994, Paris) the setting is a vacant apartment in a new development. Everything explains itself at first, does not need to be changed in order to be evident and aesthetic: The district, the block of houses, the playground, the vacant apartment, the flowery wallpaper, etc. In a type of overlapping, Claude Lévêque offers an artistic answer to their ever present theme.

The abandoned mattress, vertically placed, multiplies itself to small paths and 'sleeping rooms'. Their bleached color in the harsh neon light combined with the private bed smell, releases associations of childhood caves to underground parking decks. The flower on the wallpaper is a green neon light, blinking on the wall and window. It signalizes. The flat is occupied - by the artist.

Claude Lévêque's work in neon have been, from the beginning, his most contradictory signs - even if they are only a detail of his installation. For example: "cerveau labyrinthe en tube néon clignotant" (1993); The eye searches for possible ways between the trembling, twisting paths of the brain, between broken and overlapping neon lines, without finding a significant direction. He constructs the nervous system or twisting brain in square, hand painted forms. The right half of the brain blinks like a metaphorical neon sign and colors the room red and orange in the manner of pulsating thought.

Yet Claude Lévêque's theme always remains a graspable and traverseable reality. It is the objectivity which makes the "visitor's" sensual experience so ambivalent. He cannot remain outside; he must participate. *Appartement Occupé* was the playground or labyrinth in which one was forced to walk, stand still and climb. Even *My Way* (1996, Paris) was a marathon through various rooms organized in a circle, a parcours of being. His Installation, *Troubles*, in Kassel, is the path through a labyrinth of transparent white cloths, blind in a dense fog with which the early gothic space of the church is filled.



Claude Lévêque always carries a camera with him in order to be able to take a precise look at every day situations or details. Enlarged, these pictures are lent a new explosiveness through the hand written, scrawled comments. "Nous voulons en finir avec ce monde irréel", is written on a shaky blue dyed photo in which an exuberant, happy family is gathered together around a meal, freely presenting themselves to the artist. This sentence originated from the diary of an innocent school girl as the beginning of a revolutionary manifest. This innocent, under this motto and with unbelievable cold bloodedness, kills three police officers and a taxi driver during an assassination attempt.

Troubles - Where am I here anyway?

By Bernhard Balkenhol



## Storefront News for 1998-99 Season

**Kyong Park**, the founder and director of the Storefront for Art and Architecture since 1982, has moved his base of operations to Detroit in order to concentrate on Storefront's special project **Home: Made in Detroit**. There he will be working closely with other institutions and community members to realize this collaborative project. A profile of the Detroit project will be published in the next issue of the newsletter.

**Shirin Neshat**, co-director of the Storefront since 1986, has moved on to devote time to her own work as an artist. Shirin will continue to serve as an advisor to Storefront.

To ensure that Storefront continues to provide innovative programs and maintain its critical position in the art and architecture communities, the Board of Directors has hired **Sarah Herda** to be the new Managing Director. Most recently the Director of Sales and Marketing at The Monticelli Press, Sarah was also the Director of the Art and Architecture Exhibition Space/Center for Critical Architecture (2AES/CICA) in San Francisco, from 1995-1997.

## Storefront Events for 1998-99 Season

### M U F February - March, 1999

MUF (Modern Urban Fabric) is a collaborative practice of art and architecture, consisting of four members: Juliet Bidgood, Katherine Clarke, Liza Fior and Katherine Snofield, predicated on the production of spaces that confront issues of exclusion and subject matter traditionally censored out of architecture. One issue at the core of their practice is gender. MUF will present an installation of their most recent work at Storefront which will include their proposal for the Museum for Women's Art and the Welsall Art Gallery in London. Most recently, MUF has been selected as one of the offices to design the Interior pavilions of the Millennium Dome, the site of the United Kingdom's celebration of the millennium.

### Yves Brunier March - April, 1999

Storefront will present a posthumous exhibition of the work of the French landscape designer Yves Brunier. Brunier's work compels recognition of the practice of landscape architecture, in part because of the unique bridges he made between architecture and landscape. His representations of landscape are the most accomplished of any, notwithstanding the brevity of his career, curtailed by his death in 1991 at age 29. His collaborations with architects Rem Koolhaas and Jean Nouvel redefined the exchange between architecture and landscape architecture. His work transgresses the expectations and distinctions of landscapes relationship to architecture and anticipates its role as a connective urban tissue.

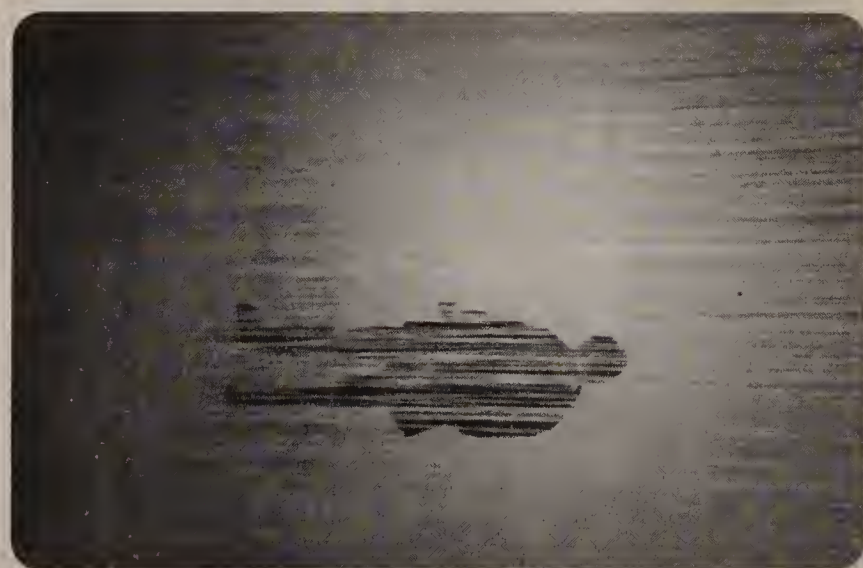
### Crimson May - June 1999

Crimson is a Rotterdam-based office of architectural historians specializing in the analysis and documentation of the invisible forces that shape the contemporary city. Working both with municipal authorities, such as the Rotterdam City Planning Department, and as an independent research and design bureau, Crimson has published numerous articles, books, and studies which focus on the impact that, for example, such seemingly abstract concerns as immigration policy or shopping patterns have on the physical environment. Crimson's focus is thus not on formal design solutions, but is instead on analyzing and transforming the conditions under which any design solution must necessarily operate in order to be successful. Their approach is a hybrid approach which discloses the importance of abstraction in the maintenance of the physical environment. It is this focus on the seemingly invisible tangle of economic, cultural, political, and policy forces that shape the Netherlands. Crimson will present at Storefront their most recent work, "Prostitution Zones", a project in The Netherlands. The exhibition will consist of documenting, analyzing, and interrogating this incredibly complicated policy issue precisely through conventional architectural means - by representation, images and models.

### The Storefront Prize July 1999

Storefront will sponsor an open submission student competition and the winners will be featured in an exhibition at Storefront. It will provide students of architecture and urban design with a unique opportunity to have their work presented and evaluated outside of their respective institutions. By presenting the Storefront Prize we hope to engage in the active investigation and promotion of the future community of architectural thinkers and practitioners. The results of the competitions will be published in a special edition of the newsletter. Submission details and deadlines will be announced in February 1999.

Storefront for Art and Architecture is a non-profit organization committed to presenting and communicating innovative positions on art, architecture and design through provocative and interdisciplinary public programs, in the form of exhibitions, conferences, publications and special projects.



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**13** October 1998 - **11** January 1999  
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an installation by **Claude Léveque**

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